



**St Francis Of Assisi  
Welwyn Garden City**

**Annual Group Reports 2019/2020**

**APCM: Sunday 4th October 2020**

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## Church Wardens' Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church 2019-20

Another busy year, with particularly focus on the requirements laid out in the report following the "*Quinquennial*" Inspection of all the church buildings which took place in the Autumn of 2018. Much of the 85 findings were in areas out of eyesight to anyone attending the church, but required attention.

By way of examples:-

- a) Parkway door has been replaced, like for like as required by WH Council and the Diocese (i.e. made of Oak). This was made for us by a local carpenter.
- b) The door to the Prayer Garden at the foot of the stairs leading to the Song School needed refurbishing as evidence of rotting was found.
- c) Glazing to the window of the West Wall had failed and needed replacing.
- d) Skylights in Ladies and Gents WC's were broken and needed repairs.
- e) Water was found in the roof of the porchway entrance, which needed to be removed and sealed.
- f) Various repairs were done to the flat roof and lantern in the Hall. Subsequently 26 bags of rotten leaves and moss were removed from the Hall roof!
- g) Stairway down to the Cellar area required metallic stair edgings and new carpet to improve safety
- h) Replacement brickwork to ground level of the Parish room where the lack of lintels above the windows had seen cracks appear.

Various other works have been completed, some by way of external contractors, and some through the endeavours of our Maintenance Committee, to whom we are extremely grateful for all that they do to keep the buildings in good order, and keep the costs down!

Not all of the prescribed areas for attention have been dealt with – in some cases the work was required "within 5 years", and indeed our focus for 2020 was to have been the redecoration of the Hall. At the time of writing this report the likelihood is that this may have to be deferred until 2021.

An asbestos survey by external specialists was carried out for the church in the first half of 2019, the Hall having been surveyed previously in 2018. These surveys were a legal requirement as confirmed in the Quinquennial Report – there were no findings of any significance.

The annual church Spring Clean on a Saturday morning was again well-organised and with our enthusiastic volunteers made everything nice again. Thanks go to all involved, whether as cleaners or providers of welcome refreshments! A few days later the church floor was polished, and the church looked resplendent in time for our Easter festivities.

Likewise, we thank the volunteers who bring their experience and regularly come and attend to the church gardens; keeping on top of the growth and making them neat and tidy. The area of garden outside the Parkway door was made much more attractive, and I would like to thank Margaret Ryder and Pamela Hawkins for their guidance and financial support.

In Frankie's Garden a new slide was purchased and installed, as the former slide had been condemned following the annual ROSPA report. Every year we purchase 20+ bags of chippings to restore the integrity of the grounds around the play equipment, and this year I was aided in the un-bagging and spreading by a passer by, who expressed her thanks to the church for providing such a wonderful and much appreciated community facility.

We welcomed the Archdeacon's representative in the summer for the annual inspection. Once again, the time taken by those who log all the records we are required to keep paid off, with everything found to be in order.

In November a Defibrillator, dedicated in memory of Mike Hallard who died suddenly and tragically during Choir Week in 2017 was installed on the external wall of the Office, and ceremonially opened by Mayor Roger Trigg on the Saturday of the 2019 Christmas Tree Festival. This great additional community facility was secured with grateful assistance and support from:-

1. The British Heart Foundation (BHF), who gave a grant of £600 towards the Defibrillator,
2. DiPPS, a local charity who champion the greater placement of Defibrillators, and who paid for the cabinet (which has to be temperature controlled to ensure it never goes below 5 degrees C)
3. WGC Rotary Club, who funded half of the expenses we incurred, e.g. groundworks, electricals etc.
4. From members of our own congregation who gave generously to raise the church's contribution to the overall costs.

One of the requirements of the BHF grant was that we would undertake CPR training using the equipment that accompanied the supplying of the Defibrillator. In March 2020, before lockdown, 12 members of the Ministry Team and PCC undertook CPR training, and in due time it is our intention to make further training sessions available to congregation members, and indeed on a wider community basis.

In concluding I, as Warden, and on behalf of the Maintenance team would like to thank everyone who has supported me/them in so many ways throughout the year. It is difficult to make specific mention of individuals, but I must give particular thanks to Stuart Richardson for his help and support to me and dedication to the successful workings of the church buildings and grounds.

We are truly blessed to have people who put so much love and effort into our church and who make it the wonderful community it is.

Tony Young

## **Children, Families & School's work March 2020**

The Children and Families Team were delighted to welcome Nikki Clare back from Parental leave in November 2019. Clare Meola and Rachel Hickey had covered in Nikki's absence from January 2019-Nov 2019.

### **Toddle Time**

Wednesday morning Toddle Time, a group for the 0-4s continues to be busy and has a regular following of families and local childminders. We have had several new families join us, which is fantastic. On average, we have between 35-40 children, plus adults. We offer an hour of free play, arts and crafts, large toys and a baby area between 10-11am. At this time, adults are offered hot drinks and biscuits. We then all tidy up and sit together. The children are offered a healthy snack and water, while we co-lead a 20-minute story and song session. We read a Church based or traditional story then sing a few songs, finishing with our two closing songs: 'Jesus love' and our goodbye song. The session finishes at 11.30 am. Families are charged an initial £1.50 and then 50p per extra child. We offer the first session for free for newcomers.

The team rotate roles between welcoming, arts and crafts and tea/coffee snack. Theresa continues to help welcome and sign everyone in and collects donations on the door. We also do a few seasonal events a year such as at Christmas, Easter and towards the end of the Summer term.

### **Tums & Tinies**

This year we offered Tums and Tinies on a Tuesday morning between 10:45-11:45 am. This group offers parents, grandparents and carers of children under 18 months a space to help their little ones grow and develop, while they can chat and share experiences. As we now offer refreshments, we have changed the suggested donation to £1.50 per family so it runs in line with Toddle time.

We have 8 mats out with various baby toys and activities, which are separated into age abilities. We then finish with 10-15 minutes of song time, always finishing with 'Jesus love' and our goodbye song.

The majority of our babies have moved on to Toddle Time so we have had smaller numbers attending. We are currently deciding if there is a need for this group in September 2020 or whether to put our energies elsewhere? Joan McDonald is our wonderful volunteer that supports both with the adult refreshments and as a great person to talk to. As a retired nurse and a grandmother she shares a wealth of knowledge and reassurance to our families that attend.

### **Messy Play/ Shake and Shimmy**

Each term we rotate between running messy play and shake & shimmy. Shake & Shimmy is a music group where we sing songs, action songs, Christian songs and dance movement. The session lasts 45 minutes and is hosted on a Friday morning.

Messy Play runs for an hour on Friday mornings. We have two tuff trays out & 3 tables all of which have Messy craft for the children to explore and create. We theme these to a topic or Christian theme (often linked with our monthly Messy Church) We also offer 4 mats with play toys for those with siblings who aren't quite old enough or interested in messy play yet.

Both sessions are for a max of 20 children plus adults to ensure the groups can run smoothly. They are popular groups and are very well attended

### **Messy Church**

Messy Church continues to be attended by regular families and our numbers are growing as we have had some attend who usually attend Christ Church as well as families who invite friends to join us, which is fantastic. We had a good team of volunteers who are great at talking with the families whilst doing a focused activity with them. The worship songs and story are proving to be successful and enjoyed by all. The new laptop is really helping us deliver our worship music on a big screen.

### **School's Work**

#### ***Schools week Christmas 2019***

December was a very busy month for everyone. We had a very successful School's week, which was well attended by year groups 2-6 from Applecroft School. Over the course of the week the children visited St Francis Church to do a series of workshops on the theme of Advent. A huge thank you to the volunteers who were able to support us. (We had hoped to do this again with Applecroft School for Easter but due to the current pandemic this was not possible.)

Nikki and Rachel also went into the nursery at Applecroft School to do a session on the Nativity Story. Rachel, Nikki and Liz led a 'Nativity themed' assembly at Lakeside school. This was well received by the children who loved dressing up in the costumes we provided and also enjoyed placing the figures from the Nativity story in the centre, as we told the story. The children seemed to really enjoy themselves and we certainly enjoyed spending time with them.

Rachel and Nikki continue to support the Ministry Team by leading either junior or infant assemblies at Applecroft school. Each assembly is linked to a bible story or parable and is offered in both Infant and Junior assemblies. (Currently these assemblies are being pre-recorded and teachers are able to play the assemblies in their classes.)

On behalf of the Children and Families Team we would like to say a huge thank you to Claire Meola who has been a great team member from January 2019 to July 2020. Claire is now training as a Teaching Assistant and we wish her every success in her new job.

Nicola Clare and Rachel Hickey

## **Youth and Childrens' Church**

### **Youth And Children's Church 0-10 years**

The Children and Families Team lead the YACC 0-11 within the church.

We generally split the groups 0-4 (parents supporting), 5-10 years but within this group older ones sometimes are given additional groupings.

Although we are responsible for the main planning of the groups we have several confident volunteers that are essential to the running of our groups. A huge thank you to Carol Jager who

took on the older 5=10 group for much of 2019 and did a superb job at running the Nativity service in December, which we all agreed was fantastic!. Carol continues to support with the groups and the Cellar Youth Group. We are always looking for more volunteers on a Sunday as these groups are vital for both the children and their parents to access church fully. We have many parents who regularly support their younger children and would be perfect to support/lead when they feel ready. Thank you to all our volunteers that contribute to keeping our YACC groups thriving and growing both in numbers and spiritually.

Rachel Hickey

### **5-10 (Reception to Year 5) In the Hall**

There are approximately 15 children between Reception (age 5) and Year 5 (age 10) who come regularly to YACC. We had a large group move up in September 2019, so did see numbers decline slightly. It took longer for Reception and Year 1 children to move up to this group for various reasons. We have on occasion combined this group with the 0 - 5 year olds, especially on weeks when the choir do not meet. This is mainly due to the drop in attendance and the fact that on the non-choir weeks the children attending tend to be younger. The mix of ages is fairly even with a good proportion in both key stage 1 & 2.

Carol Jager has started to oversee this group, taking over from Zoe Jasko, who remains a member of the group. Carol is helped in the planning and teaching of the sessions by Rachel Hickey, Jo Dunstan and David Dommett. There are occasional helpers and a couple of parents who sit with their younger children from time to time. We sometimes break into two age groups (5 - 7 and 8-10) with age related activities.

We have found that the children enjoy themed learning with a mixture of teaching, games and craft activities. All sessions are linked to a Bible passage. In 2019-2020 the topics we have covered have been: Summer Term – the Ten Commandments & parables, Autumn Term – Introduction to the Bible, Harvest Festival plus our annual Nativity Play. In the Spring 2020 term we spent the whole term learning about the new Vision for St Francis Church. Where ever possible we link the learning from this age group to the Applecroft Assemblies.

Carol Jager

### **11+ (Year 6+ ) In the Cellar**

Over the last year, we have averaged around 12 members of the group and enjoy open discussion that is used to develop understanding of our church and its services.

We have largely focused the sessions on the lectionary readings to explore context and interpretation which often identifies off-shoot subjects that we explore in subsequent sessions.

Our group this year seemed to particularly enjoy the discussion that resulted from the sermon delivered by Bishop Michael and always listen more attentively when the subject crosses over with subjects that might crop up in their school studies!

The group continues to be thoughtful and is developing through a younger in take in September 2019. There are always some challenging questions and there is a good level of engagement despite the relatively short sessions.

I would like to thank Paul Dunstan and Howell Schroeder as my fellow leaders of this group during the year. If anyone would like to come along as a helper, we are always looking for new members of the team to both support and lead sessions. Please do volunteer and come and learn!

Simon Fennell

## Youth Groups

### **Cellar (8-12 years)**

Cellar is our youth group, welcoming children from school Years 4-7. It is run by a small group of parent volunteers and we have one older youth helper from year 10.

The group meet once a week, sharing a meal together and then doing a mixture of fun game and activity based sessions.

The purpose of the group is to provide the children with a safe space to unwind from their busy lives and to explore wider topics within a Christian setting. The church vision statements are also used as a framework to plan Cellar Group activities linked to outreach, environment preservation and inclusivity, for example.

In 2019 we had fun, litter picking, sending parcels to refugees in the local area at Christmas time and doing the Cellar Christmas Tree which was linked to Eco Warriors and teaching about the harmful effects of single use plastics. The Cellar children never fail to impress the team of adults who volunteer, with their passion, understanding and commitment to the initiatives we undertake as a group.

If you have a child in years 4-7 who would like to know more about what we do at Cellar Group, please contact me via email: [rachelhickey.stfranciswgc@outlook.com](mailto:rachelhickey.stfranciswgc@outlook.com).

*Please note that due to Government guidelines we are currently reviewing how and when we can meet but are looking toward resuming after the October half term.*

Rachel Hickey  
Children and Families Team Assistant

### **Connect (13+ years)**

Connect ran consistently on Friday evenings with a regular membership of 5 teenagers, before taking a break over the summer holiday. It was good also to meet in the Christmas term and the start of the Lent Term, as a final time with Reverend Liz Lavelle before her departure to Codicote. Sadly, the pandemic then prevented us from meeting from March onwards.

When meeting, we continued to examine the impact of relationship with Jesus on our daily lives, with the focus always to nurture the faith of these young believers. Evenings were social events enabling the youth members to meet and chat in an informal environment over some food generously provided by Rev'd Liz. Sessions always had a focus on a theme of Christian living, tied into scripture, and we used a variety of stimulus materials to open discussion, ranging from music, to film and literature. During Lent, we followed a course by Adrian Plass examining the story of David and Bathsheba.

I am particularly grateful to Rev'd Liz for her commitment to the group over the last four years. After four years, I too would like to be able to hand over to some others to run this group and support the youth.

I urge others to pray about whether God is calling them to support His work in this way.  
Paul Dunstan

## **Women's group report March 2020**

We have had another year filled with inspiring, thoughtful and worshipful events. The team have been trying hard to give a choice of events and days so as many members of the church can attend as possible.

Our first event of last year in April was our Worshipful Women event with the talented Fiona joined by Jo and Annabel to lead us in a session of contemporary and traditional worship songs. We held this one in the Lady Chapel and it definitely added to the event.

In July we were joined by some inspirational women who told us their stories and life changing events that were led by God. Fiona spoke about her Tearfund expedition to Africa in the 90's and Beth Ann described the work she is doing currently with children and young people at Stanborough School to develop their relationship with God. We learnt about Bridget's colourful life as a missionary and Tina gave us all a copy of her book on overcoming challenges with Gods help. Finally Kathryn, who is due to be ordained soon, spoke about her calling to ministry. It is on evenings like these that we are reminded of the lives people have led before we meet them and how we as a church can impact on so many people.

Our November event focused on active prayer using Labyrinths. We built a labyrinth in the church hall from fairy lights (thank you to the church wardens for allowing us to use them) and we made labyrinths from lentils, thread, colouring, scratch art. We also decorated stones that we then used as part of our CTF entry. This event was very well received with several younger and one older member of our congregation joining us for the first time.

In January Fiona, Jo and Annabel led us again in an evening of contemporary and traditional worship songs in a regularly occurring event that many people say inspires and connects them to God. We are blessed to have some very talented musicians among us, although the only talent needed to join us for these evenings is a desire to worship.

We had some events planned for this year the most notable was supposed to be a drumming workshop, however this is on hold. We are looking at whether we can offer some opportunities for fellowship and worship through our virtual church format so look out for announcements or if you have an idea then please get in touch.

The evenings are organised by a small group of women from St Francis and we are always happy to welcome new helpers.

Alison Paterson (on behalf of St Francis Women's Group: Fiona Burke, Montse Day, Alice Elder, Alison Paterson and Clare Smith)

## **House-groups**

House-groups continue to provide members of St Francis Church with fellowship, mutual support and opportunities to deepen their faith. The groups meet fortnightly on a variety of mornings, afternoons and evenings and use a wide range of study material in different ways. In addition to study of some kind, house-groups provide pastoral care for their members and their neighbours. Some newer house-groups are now meetings but we are still hoping to create more and to integrate them more within the life of our church and congregation.

Jenny Fennell  
June 2020



## **Thursday Lunches**

Thursday Lunches had continued to welcome people to share food and fellowship together on a Thursday lunchtime right up until the Pandemic regulations made it impossible to continue. We have to give thanks as ever for the hard work and commitment of our regular team of helpers. They make soup, do the shopping, prepare, set up, serve, welcome and clear up and even enjoy doing it.

It is always so good to see a wide range of people regularly being part of a group. No charge is made, the lunches rely on voluntary contributions.

The number of people attending has remained strong this year, typically 20 to 24 each week and we were again able to cater for around 60 people at the Christmas lunch - again, wonderfully supported by great volunteers, some of whom use their skills particularly at this event.

Once things get back to normal we anticipate a gradual restoration of our Lunches, a lot of people have got to know each other and fairly quickly the message that we have re-started should get around, or perhaps we can attract some new faces! We will still need to rely on a great team of helpers, so thanks go to them.

Julie and Craig Lowes

## **Prayers Round the Parish Scheme**

Every week throughout the year, a prayer is said in Intercessions for those who live and work in a certain road(s) in the parish. In preparation for this, each resident or business in that road receives through the letter box a yellow card explaining that prayers for them are going to be said in Church, during the week that is printed on the card. By the end of the year, every road in the parish will have been covered, including the town centre.

On the card, there is space to write a prayer request if they so wish, and an invitation to post the card through the door of the vicarage. Should anyone require a visit from the Vicar, Rev. Jenny's contact details are there too.

There is a happy band of over 50 volunteers who deliver the cards through the letterboxes. Most rounds take under an hour, some only 15 minutes. My thanks go out to you if you, dear reader, are one of these deliverers. It's a joy to hear your willing voice on the phone when I ring you to ask if you can do this task once again, or to see you smile when I approach you in church bearing a little pile of yellow prayer cards. Your faithfulness is commendable. Thank you, you make my job easy.

This is an important part of the outreach of St Francis Church, letting everyone in the parish know that, whether Christian or not, whether churchgoer or not, they are regularly held in prayer by our congregation. I am often asked if there is a response to the cards and Jenny tells me that there is, so it is very much worthwhile continuing with this outreach endeavour.

It is worth adding that those members who live outside the parish, many of whom play a full and active part in the life of St Francis Church, are prayed for on the last Sunday of the year.

Unfortunately, this scheme had to be suspended at the end of March this year when lockdown was imposed. We continue to name the streets in our parish week by week in Intercessions in church and Rev. Jenny, Denise (who produces the cards) and I will review the situation in November with a view to resuming deliveries in January. Perhaps by then our faithful deliverers, those not shielding, may feel comfortable about putting cards through letterboxes and residents too may feel comfortable about receiving an extra missive through the door.

Marcia Agnew

## **FLOWER TEAM**

During the past year (2019), the flower team continued to prepare floral displays each week at various locations in the church, except during Advent and Lent when flowers are not displayed.

We decided that due to rising costs, we will use flowers in arrangements on special Sundays, that is, Easter, Harvest etc, and also when members of the congregation provide donations for a special occasion/anniversary. Grateful thanks to those congregation members who have given donations. If you would like to donate, please sign the list in the porch. During the other weeks the church is decorated with foliage arrangements.

Daffodils are provided on Mothering Sunday, red poppies for Remembrance Day and there is an Advent ring and an Easter ring.

Once again, many thanks to the faithful members of the team for organising the rota, buying flowers, planning and setting up the displays, keeping the flower cupboard well-organised and the many other tasks associated with arranging flowers on Sundays and any other day we may be requested to do so; not forgetting the task of watering them during the week to keep them fresh.

During the year we welcomed Louise Lucas (née Viner) to the team.

Jenny Blanch

## **SACRISTY REPORT FOR 2020 APCM**

A small group continues to prepare for the Eucharist every Sunday and ensure that the elements are there for all other services. The recent Covid-19 episode has highlighted the fact that only one of the five volunteers is under 70. Hopefully we will not be confined to home when services resume, but it could be helpful if some younger members of the congregation could join the group and learn what the job entails.

The twelve 'small linen' volunteers who launder the cloths used during the services on a monthly basis do a wonderful job- thankyou. Hilda Goddard continues to re-cycle discarded white bed linen to make new purificators and lavabo towels. All donations gratefully received! Again, most of us are above 70, and it would be helpful if some younger members were able to step in to help when needed.

Work continued through 2019 to ensure a good supply of the necessary candles for the different types of service through the year, the ordering of palm crosses and the collection and burning of old crosses to provide the ashes for Ash Wednesday services. The oil burning candles for the main altar and the acolytes' candles were regularly replenished with smokeless oil and wick adjustment/cleaning. The range of wax candles for the chapel altars, the Votive Candle Stand and for candle-lit services, as well as for the Chapel of Repose on Maundy Thursday, are also kept in good order, with trimming or replacement as necessary. To ensure they burn throughout the night those candles in the Chapel of Repose must be large ones, and additionally special long-lasting small candles were again successfully used. Candles were also provided around the church for the Light Party on All Hallows Eve. 250 candles were supplied for Christingles and countless votive candles were lit by visitors during this year's Christmas Tree Festival. Additional candles were put out around the church for the Carol Services – an activity that can take several people 30–40 minute, even when prepared in advance, and another 20-30 minutes to collect them in and put away afterwards. Offers of help with this are always welcome. The large Paschal Candle also required preparation, to ensure it fitted the candle stand

properly and was ready to accept the five special nails (each of which carries a grain of incense) on Easter Day.

Help in cleaning the candlesticks and Votive Candle Stand, preparing candles for services, and the donation of new or little used candles is always welcome. Please speak to Anthony Packer or a member of the clergy.

Jan Nafzger and Anthony Packer

### **THE LINEN TEAM**

For obvious reasons our services were not required during lockdown but now we are happy and relieved to participate once again in our usual duties.

As previously, the team currently consists of three members: Diane Hemmings, Clare Smith and myself, who take turns every eight weeks or so to wash and iron the cloths.

Some of the linen is frail, other pieces are over fifty years old and still going strong. We are keeping a close eye on them all and making good where we can.

A fourth member, Margaret O'Donnell, deals with the repairs and recycles spare linen and lace into much needed and attractive new cloths.

We were growing increasingly concerned about the sad state of the St Francis table, which stands by the door leading to the parish room. Linen and flowers always decorate the table but there was only so much we could do to hide the poor woodwork etc. Much to our relief, however, help was at hand in the form of Keith Crabb and Peter Pearson who restored the table to its former glory and helped brighten up a rather gloomy corner. Thank you very much, gentlemen, for all your hard work.

Finally, and as always, we could do with an extra pair of hands so if you find that your commitments have changed and you could help us occasionally, then please get in touch. We would welcome your assistance.

Lynn Burling

### **FRIENDS OF ST FRANCIS 2020 APCM Report**

Trustees: Gordon Butler, John Butler (Chairman), Maurice Champ (Honorary Founder Trustee), Revd Jenny Fennell (*ex officio*), Jackie Giberti (Treasurer), Mary Jackson, Dick Johns, Pui San Apling and Jan Nafzger (secretary)

The Friends' Trustees met twice in 2019, and again in February 2020. We were delighted to welcome Pui San as a trustee during the year – her knowledge of the day to day running of the church, and photocopying skills have already proved invaluable.

We were grateful to receive two legacies during the year from the estates of the late Don Tester and the late Margaret Hill. With these, and other funds, we were pleased to donate three sets of banners to the church for Christmas, Easter and Advent.

For some time, the trustees have been exploring ways of widening the remit of the Friends and increasing its income. Some time had been spent on designing and producing a leaflet explaining the history and aims of the organisation. This was due to be launched at the Family Service for Mothering Sunday on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. This did not happen because of Covid-19. Hopefully it will happen later this year at an appropriate time. The Friends will look to support the PCC as much as possible at this difficult time.

Jan Nafzger

## **Safeguarding report for 2020 APCM**

St Francis church endeavours to keep everyone, children and adults, safe and to comply with all relevant laws. The safeguarding group supports the PCC and all the people of St Francis in trying to do this.

The parish is, in turn, supported by the diocesan safeguarding team and the national teams. They provide the opportunity for training and advice on policies. Some policies, processes and training courses are mandatory.

It is important that everyone in our community at St Francis understands their own responsibility and is appropriately trained. Training varies according to role. In some limited cases, if necessary, people need to be checked with the government's Disclosure and Barring Service. Not only must people be trained but we must be able to provide written evidence that they have been appropriately recruited and trained.

As part of this the volunteer register must be kept up to date. Many of our volunteers were initially trained in 2017 meaning the training is due for renewal this year, your group leader will be in touch with details of how to renew your training.

Alison Paterson is the current Parish Safeguarding Officer, she is supported by John Butler, Tony Boon, Craig Lowes, Denise Crabb and Nikki Clare.

All our safeguarding information including important contacts are now available on the new Church website. Later this year we will be reviewing the arrangements in the light of advice on the impact of Coronavirus on church activities."

Alison Paterson  
Parish Safeguarding Officer

## **Report on the Alter Servers 2019-2020**

For some years this report has sadly had to highlight the need for additional servers, and the risk of shortages, especially at the 8.00 service. There continued to be one Sunday in four when there was no server at the 8.00 service for most of the year due to a server's health, In the absence of a server the priest who is celebrating must prepare the altar and clear away afterwards, which means they are not available for individual ministry to members of the congregation before and after the service. It had been hoped that a member of the 8.00 congregation would come forward to help, but this has not happened, and it now seems unlikely that it will in the future, with the result that there will continue to be some 8.00am services with no server.

The situation for servers at the 9.15 services improved slightly with the addition of 4 more young people and 2 adults during the year. Unfortunately, 2 of the young people are expected to join the choir. This means that there will shortly be 8 servers who are also in the choir and therefore only available to serve, 2 at a time, on one Sunday in the month. This means that each one probably only serves once in 3 or 4 months, and since most are still relatively inexperienced there is an inherent risk of forgetting some of the things to do. Two acolytes and a crucifer received their Servers' Crosses during the year.

Arranging a rota without overloading the younger servers continues to be difficult, especially at holiday times and the seasons of Christmas and Easter. We are grateful to all who have continued to maintain our serving traditions during these difficult times.

There is still a general reliance on children to serve at the 9.15 service, together with the willing few adults and, as indicated above, more adult servers are badly needed if the traditions of our services are to be maintained. The book of Numbers records how God set aside people dedicated to serve at His altar, and all servers follow in that tradition. The only limitations to being a server at St Francis are height and mobility. At the younger end of the age spectrum (usually about 9 years old) you need to be big enough to carry an acolyte's candle up the chancel steps and at the other end you must be able to go up and down those steps unaided while carrying a cross or candle. All our servers will tell you that the duties are not difficult to learn - the youngest regularly prove it is "child's play". The Orders of Service are clearly annotated as a guide, and there are always experienced servers on hand to help or advise. And how many readers of this report last notice that a server had got it wrong? If you feel God may be calling you to serve Him at His altar and would like to know more, please contact me or talk to a member of the ministry team.

Please include both our current serving team and our need for more adult servers in your prayers.

Anthony Packer  
Head Server

### **ST FRANCIS CHOIR (May 2019 to March 2020)**

Since the last APCM, we have welcomed the following as Probationers into the choir: Maia Day, Helena Dunstan, David Fennell, Eloise Jasko and Matthew Porter (all siblings of current choristers!). Hopefully, it shall not be too long before you start to see them appear in the services. Over the last year the following trebles retired due to voice breaks: Conrad and Rufus Jasko and Toby Steedman. Amelie Apling and Annabel Dunstan both retired as Head Choristers at the end of Choir Week last Summer.

Choir Week was in Portsmouth Cathedral again last Summer (twice in a row) due to accommodation problems in the school we had booked for Guildford. We will try again for Guildford next Summer, having had a forced break this Summer when we should have been at Salisbury Cathedral. Choir Week was again a huge success, and my thanks to all who helped organise and run this mammoth operation. We were very sorry to say goodbye to Andrew and Marion Henthorn at the end of the week – Andy has been a member of the choir since 1988 and we will miss them both. They are now enjoying retirement in Peebles (near Edinburgh). We welcome David Hitchin as a bass in the choir.

Congratulations to Annelise Apling, Amelie Evans and Thomas Noakes who all achieved their St Francis Awards during Choir Week. Congratulations again to Annelise and Thomas who were promoted to Head Chorister positions at the start of Autumn term 2019 (and continue to this day). Other promotions during the year were Matthew Dunstan, Amelie Evans and Heather Pollock who became Team Leaders.

We had a splendid afternoon singing evensong in Aldeburgh Parish Church (Suffolk) last September, followed by a sumptuous tea in the church hall, and even time for a paddle on the beach (the weather was very kind to us!).

Advent and Christmas carol services went very well, and so too did the midnight mass, which for the second year running featured a top line of retired and senior girls along with the backrow of the choir.

All singing was curtailed with immediate effect after Mothering Sunday this year so term ended abruptly at that point. During the Summer term we did manage to do some online singing and had a number of choir quizzes, so the choir has been able to socialise and sing (albeit in their own individual homes) during this period.

Thanks to all who help me at St Francis; to Robin for all of his organ playing and behind the scenes admin work, Liz for everything she does with the St Francis Singers, coaching the trebles, supporting me in rehearsals *and* singing alto, Thanks also to the members of

the choirs, their partners and parents – without their dedication and commitment none of this would happen. And finally, thanks to the Vicar, Clergy team, PCC, and Wardens for supporting us in our musical offerings.

Richard Harrison

### **APCM report on St Francis Singers April 2019**

St Francis Singers is a Ladies choir and has sung for the 9.15am Sunday service once a month on the second Sunday for about 5 years, having previously been a Men and Ladies Choir for about 17 years.

Towards the end of 2018, it was decided that the main 9.15am Sunday Eucharist service should remain choral, even when the St Francis Choir were away - at half-terms and holidays. Since January 2019 the number of services to be sung by St Francis Singers Ladies throughout the year was increased to fill in the Sundays that were school holidays for the choir's choristers. The SFS choir has been developing wonderfully well in musicianship and the ability to learn new music more quickly. It has also benefitted the individual singers considerably. The members of this choir are extremely loyal, for which I thank them enormously, and they are also very trusting with the different types of repertoire that I put in front of them each month.

The ladies also sing, when required, for the midweek evening services - Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Soul's Day. This is usually a combination choir of senior choristers, Ladies and Men.

We were able to take part in the concert by the St Francis Choir on March 7th this year 2 weeks before the lockdown situation took place, so from then on unfortunately, the opportunity to sing at these extra services was impossible from the middle of March, and therefore also including the Easter services in April, and is currently still the case as the church is closed to all activities and services.

Our rehearsal night is normally on Thursdays at 7.30pm before the Sunday when we are due to sing. Our calendar is individual to each month and looks ahead for each 6 months at a time. We hope we can resume when the Church of England says we can.

Liz Green (May2020)

### **CHARITIES TEAM**

Team members: Pui San Apling, Amanda Williams

Since the 2019 APCM St Francis Church Congregation have been most generous in their offerings and support for which the team thanks everyone.

In 2019, The PCC agreed to focus charitable giving to a smaller number of charities (one international and one domestic) which means they receive larger amounts – the chosen charities will be alternated amongst the historical list of charities and other charities that have not been shortlisted before will also be considered. The charities selected are those whose missions/objectives (insofar as possible) mirror our own church mission statement and vision namely, in transforming lives and Christian outreach. Over the year we have sent amounts (in total c£7,5k) to Mercy Ships, Fikelela Aids Project/Children's Centre (based in South Africa), The Mixed Group, Christian Aid, The Children's Society, CRISIS and The Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust.

#### **These donations include the following events and activities:**

The 2019 Lent Lunch & Talk on 10<sup>th</sup> March (and Appeal through collections) supported Mercy Ships (c£1,035).

The Annual Christian Aid week (12-19 May) collection and ever popular Quiz Night raised c£1,230 for Christian Aid

The annual Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust Bike 'n Hike received c£360, with grateful thanks to dedicated volunteers who raised sponsorships from their hiking and biking feats around Hertfordshire. The Bishop's Harvest Appeal – Light up Tanzania (Shared Supper event attended by about 20-30 families and congregation collection) raised an encouraging c£828.

The annual Christingle collections (Crib & Christingle Services), Christmas Card sales and on-going boxes at home raised c£1,510.

From the annual 9 Lessons and Carols Service collection, we gave CRISIS (national charity for homelessness) c£462.

We also gave £894 each to The Mixed Group (a local charity which raises funds to host an annual Christmas meal and summer Cream Tea for the lonely (those living alone) and elderly residents of Welwyn Hatfield Borough and Fikelela Aids Project/Children's Centre based in South Africa.

We have just had our Lent Lunch on 8th March to raise funds for Mission Aviation Fellowship Ships having heard a most inspiring talk.

### **The position at the moment**

It should be noted that the Charities Team is particularly small (but receives wonderful support and encouragement from its' former Committee members) would benefit hugely from the participation of more (new) members. As such, we ask our wider Church family to pray, reflect and encourage more new people (whatever age) to join the team. Fresh perspectives, new ideas are always welcomed.

At time of writing, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and partial easing of restrictions, we were severely curtailed in physical fundraising events which we could host. Fundraising efforts were concentrated on ensuring a financially viable church funds position and we encourage all to donate via online methods (e.g. Just Giving) to those charities that we support. However, we will continue to do what we can in church and at this time we have just supported The Bishop's Harvest Appeal – 'Create a buzz in Nepal' with collections from Harvest Festival on 27<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Thank you to everyone for your generosity and support to our charitable giving.**

*Pui San Apling March 2020, Updated 1 Oct 2020*

### **Coffee for all**

Coffee for All continues to flourish as a mid-week meeting place, mainly for St Francis Church members, but also for a number of 'outside' friends of St Francis, who are always very welcome to join us.

The Parish Room buzzes with good fellowship from 10.30 am on a Wednesday morning and this year we have regularly had 20-25 people attend.

The Coffee for All prayer continues to inspire us and during the year our prayers for new helpers were answered with Montse Day, Liz Hyde, Heather Perrin joining the team.

None of this would be possible without that wonderful group of helpers, Isabel Greenwood, Janet Turnbull, Susan Welton, Sheila Morgan and Dick Johns who regularly give up time and participate. Additionally, thanks to Hilary Marshall and Sonja Park, who have stepped down after many years helping out.

Very sadly David Buck, our Coffee for All organiser, died last month. We all send our condolences to Gillian and their families, and hold them in our prayers.

Sally Ewers

### **Christmas Tree Festival 2019**

The Christmas Tree Festival in December 2019 was another great success, it seems that the footfall is growing each year which is great news.

As always, Craig, Dougie, Stuart, Pui San alongside many others did an amazing job ensuring everything was in place for the weekend so a big thank you to everyone for all your hard work that

goes on behind the scenes as well as the event itself, just couldn't do it without your commitment and energy!

Trend is still seeing tree applications at the last minute, Pui San managed to rally the applicants up and we had 74 trees. I hope that in the future deadlines can be met to avoid the last-minute stress that has become a regular occurrence.

It is always so lovely to hear the wonderful feedback from the community, they are always so engaging and delight in the trees and the imagination behind them, so the voting never becomes easier. Many congratulations to the winners, and a big thanks to all participants who make the festival what is today. Hope your thinking caps are already homed in for 2020, remaining positive that the current situation will be more flexible by then.

1<sup>st</sup> WGC Scouts were really busy, the hall seemed to be permanently full of people taking refreshments, chancing their luck on the tombola and playing the games laid on by the Scouts. Keep up the good work!

In terms of Christmas Tree Festival fund raising, we did amazingly well with the overall figure of £7,000 split between 1<sup>st</sup> WGC Scouts and the Church.

The St Francis Youth Choir added a wonderful ambience once again, thank you to Georgia and Eleanor for leading this.

Sadly, I didn't guess the correct weight of the cake; one day!! Thank you to Julie and Fiona for creating such a wonderful cake.

It was marvelous to see that John Lewis and Tesco trees raised money in the Silent Auction, and the Giving Tree went to Elizabeth House.

Watch this space for 2020, in the 100<sup>th</sup> year of Welwyn Garden City I am sure there will be great themed trees.

Always need Santas, so if you fancy it, please let myself or the office know.

Amanda Williams

### **Comms team Report for APCM 2020**

As we write this report (in May 2020), we are mindful that the world around us has changed significantly, and our ability to communicate with each other has been severely restricted by the COVID19 outbreak.

This report however focuses on the period April 2019 – March 2020, so in effect, does not cover the ongoing and significant amount of work that has been done by the comms team and many other people at St Francis during the pandemic 'lockdown'.

However, as APCM 2021 is a long way off, it's important to recognise now that since the lockdown, we are using several communication channels like never before. Thanks to the efforts of the team, we now have Youth and Children's Church over Zoom, we use Slack for planning, Facebook for sharing resources for young people, we have our own YouTube channel for regular services, email chains for house groups keeping in touch...and not forgetting the good old telephone with calls around the congregation.

The decision to develop a new St Francis website that offers people clearer and better access to information, and a more efficient way of updating key information was the right one, and we can all see why now. Together with our Facebook page, our website is now the mainstay of our communication, and offers everyone the opportunity to engage with St Francis in ways they couldn't before. Hopefully more of us have now visited the website and Facebook page – please keep coming back and let us know any comments or suggestions.

We have now updated the St Francis Welcome Folder and Inserts, to reflect the changes over the last year or so. If you have one, do take a look and let us know if anything else needs updating. We were also looking at updating our external Noticeboards, and hope to make some progress, later this year.



Just a word on emails and internet-related things. It is no coincidence that the number and frequency of on-line phishing, identity theft and other internet criminal activity has increased dramatically since the start of the pandemic – so please be mindful of any dubious emails that ask you to click on a link, or ask you to divulge personal information. As with everything just now, it's safety first, and the same very much applies to using emails and the internet generally.

As always, we would really appreciate any ideas, suggestions or comments on any aspect of how we communicate. Or if you would be interested in helping us out in some way, please do get in touch with one of the team.

Rob (on behalf of The St Francis Comms team)  
Email: [stfcommsgroup@gmail.com](mailto:stfcommsgroup@gmail.com)

## DEANERY SYNOD

The Welwyn Hatfield Deanery comprises fifteen parishes in Welwyn, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and those in surrounding communities. All licensed clerks in holy orders in the deanery are members and a number of active retired clergy also attend meetings. John Butler, Alice Elder, Pui San Apling and Rob Smith are St Francis's lay representatives until April 2020. Our April round of APCM is deferred to 4<sup>th</sup> Oct hence no changes in deanery synod membership till then.

The synod of the deanery met three times in 2019. Each meeting receives reports from the Rural Dean, the Revd Jenny Fennell, and from the Lay Chair, Kathryn Alford. It also receives reports on the meetings of Diocesan Synod, the General Synod (CoE) and on the Diocesan Board for Finance. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), legal compliance effective since 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and Safeguarding remain as repeated items on the agendas.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 synod meeting was a short one, as Rachel Brockie speaker for The Children's Society (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary-Christingle Service) had a horrific riding accident just then. General matters throughout the year included preparations for hosting of The Lambeth Conference 2020 (hosting accommodation venues, programme for the visiting Bishop, etc.) and general revisiting and readiness for the next phase of the Diocese's vision - Living God's Love 2020-25, the Big Conversation, etc.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Oct meeting was an Open Synod at St John's Hilltop to enable a wider audience to hear Rev'd Andrew Gardner, their newly appointed Vicar on 'resource church ministry' and how his founding experiences from 'Soul Survivor' days could shape the future of Christian outreach to youth and mixed communities in Hatfield. Andrew's vision is 'to do something a little different' – a version of 'resource ministry' that crosses traditions, across all worship styles to get the best dialogue and engagement from all groups - Perhaps this could be a way forward....

Finally, the 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020 Synod heard from Rev'd Phillip Waller, Team Vicar of St Giles, Codicote (currently on secondment to the Diocese as Assoc. Diocesan Director of Ordinands). His presentation slides covered: Formal roles with structured training, Sensing a vocation, How to explore vocations, Discerning a vocation and also included quietly powerful and spiritually affirming personal testimonials from Nikki Johnson and Joseph Barnes.

At time of writing, per Government guidelines, churches were closed on 15<sup>th</sup> March (includes cancellation of 4<sup>th</sup> May Synod) and St Francis resumed public worship services on 12<sup>th</sup> Jul.

The Standing Committee, chaired by the Rural Dean, considers any matters arising between meetings. This committee also acts as the Pastoral Committee for the deanery, reviewing all parish ministry team pastoral matters under the guidance of the Rector of Hatfield. Alice Elder and John Butler represent St Francis on the Standing Committee.

The Archdeacon of Hertford, the Ven. Janet Mackenzie, had begun a series of parish visits in early 2019 to get to know better and understand the parishes but the 2020 series of visitations have been cancelled/postponed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The diocese operates a Parish Share system, whereby all parishes contribute (according to their means) to the diocese's running costs. This mainly covers the total cost of clergy provision in the diocese. In 2019 our deanery was again one of a handful of deaneries that paid their full share. The standing committee reviewed the deanery's share factors in 2019 and recommended no changes.

The synod noted various changes in clergy deployment and 1 incumbent vacancy (Hatfield Hyde) remaining at end of the year.

*John Butler, Alice Elder, Pui San Apling and Rob Smith March 2020, Amended 1st Oct 2020*